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LITTLE ENGEL

A BALLAD

WITH A SERIES OF

EPIGRAMS FROM THE PERSIAN

BY

GEORGE BORROW

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1913

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LITTLE ENGEL.

It was the little Engel, he
So handsome was and gay ;
To Upland rode he on a tide
And bore a maid away.

In ill hour he to Upland rode
And made a maid his prize ;
The first night they together lay
Was down by Vesteryse.

It was the little Engel he
Awoke at black midnight,
And straight begins his dream to state
In terror and affright.

“Methought the wolf-whelp and his dam,
The laidly she-wolf gray,
Tore out my heart, and twixt their teeth
Did hold it as I lay.”

“That thou dream’st little Engel thus
Can cause slight wonderment,
When me thou’st ta’en by might and main
Nor asked my friends’ consent.”

In came Solwey Johnsen then
And stood before the table ;
He was I ween a clever lad,
And well to speak was able.

“Hear thou, my lord, Little Engel,
Rise up and straight begone ;
For here Sir Godey Loumand comes
By four ways to the town.”

“I fear not four, Solwey Johnsen,
Nor five fear I, nor ten !
I fear not Godey Sir Loumand, though
He come with thirty men.”

“ O there are more than four, Sir,
Or five, Sir, or than ten ;
Here cometh Godey Sir Loumand with
A hundred armed men.”

It was the little Engel, he
Took Malfred in his arm :
“ Now, dearest heart, some counsel give
May free us from this harm.”

It was the little Engel, her
Upon the white cheek kiss'd :
“ Now do thou hear, my bosom's dear,
With counsel us assist.”

“ The best advice that I can give
I'll give thee in this case ;
To Mary's Church we will retire,
They'll ne'er destroy that place.

“ We'll gold and silver take, and on
The scale we'll pile them high ;
To-morrow from the Churchmen we
The holy place will buy.

“Around you call your merry men all
To whom you’ve given bread ;
For refuge we to the Kirk will flee
Since we are thus bestead.

“Do you take all your merry men who
Your coursers’ backs have prest ;
We’ll hie us to our Lady’s church,
And set our hearts at rest.

“That’s the best counsel, love, I know,
A simple woman I ;
In Mary’s house we’ll lock ourselves,
And there our foes defy.”

It was the little Engel,
Into the church he went :
Sir Loumand to beleaguer him
A hundred men has sent.

Before the kirk his men they lay
Till full five months were past ;
It was Godey Sir Loumand
So wrathful grew at last.

Then spake the mother of little Malfred,
With hate 'gainst her was fill'd :
"The Kirk of Maria burn with fire,
And it with gold rebuild."

The fire began to burn, to burn,
The sparkles in they flew ;
At that adread was little Malfred,
And ashy pale she grew.

It was so hot in the Kirk yard when
Abroad the blazes sped ;
But in the Kirk still hotter when
In poured the melted lead.

It was the little Malfred,
So frantic was her mood :
"O let us quick the horses stick,
And cool us with their blood."

Then little Engel answer made,
As on the floor he stood :
"But coolness small shall we derive
From our good coursers' blood."

Answered the groom who loved the steeds
As dearly as his breath :
“Ye’d better little Malfred stick,
She well deserveth death.”

It was the little Engel,
His arms round Malfred twin’d :
“No death hast thou deserved from us,
And none from us shalt find.

“My little Malfred, do thou hear
What I now say to thee ;
If a son this year thou chance to bear,
That son name after me.”

They placed her on a buckler,
They placed their spears below,
And through the window lifted her
With hearts so full of woe.

It was the little Malfred round
The church goes staggering now,
Scorched were her scarlet robes, and scorched
The ringlets on her brow.

It was the little Malfred fell
 Upon her white bare knee :
“ O may I bear a son this year,
 The avenger of this to be.”

So they the little Malfred took
 And in a mantle roll'd,
And sorrowfully lifted her
 Upon a courser bold.

Outspake the little Malfred when
 She reached the verdant plain :
“ Burnt is our Lady's house this day,
 And burnt so bold a swain.

“ Burnt is our Lady's house, and burnt
 Therein so brave a swain ;
His equal till the day of doom
 We ne'er shall see again.”

It happened in the autumn tide,
 The autumn of that year,
That she within her secret bower,
 A beauteous boy did bear.

To the holy Kirk they carried him,
They christened him at night ;
They called him little Engel, and
Concealed him whilst they might.

They fostered him for winter one,
And so on, till he grew
The fairest knight beneath the sun
That you did ever view.

So well he grew and throve until
Seven years had passed away :
“ Thy uncle slew thy sire, my boy,
For the first time, that I say.”

Still with his mother he remained
Till five more years were sped :
“ Thy uncle slew thy father, boy,”
He heard most often said.

“ Now do thou hear, my mother dear,
Who sittest clad in pall ;
Up under Oe I’ll riding go,
And serve in the Monarch’s hall.”

“ Yes, ride thee hence to Court, and there
To win thee honor try ;
Forget not who thy father slew,
For the last time I cry.”

He served so long at court that he
His friend the Dane King made ;
With heavy heart he'd sit apart
Whilst others laugh'd and play'd.

The Danish King observed at last
He grieved at seasons all :
“ Now hear, good youth, I'd know forsooth
Why thou art sorrow's thrall.

“ Thou grievest like the little bird
The greenwood bough upon ;
Thou seemest like the lonely wight
Whose friends are dead and gone.”

“ Now do thou hear, thou King of the Danes,
With grief I down am weigh'd ;
My uncle slew my sire of old,
And no atonement made.”

“If thou wilt up of the country ride,
And well avenge that deed,
As many of my men to thee
I'll lend, as thou shalt need.

“If thou'lt avenge thy father's death,
Thou shalt have fitting aid ;
Three hundred of my men to thee
I'll lend, in steel array'd.”

It was the little Engel, he
Rides in the greenwood shade ;
He marshals there his good men all,
And sets him at their head.

In haste came in the little footboy,
And stood before the table ;
He was I ween a clever lad,
And well to speak was able.

“Now hear, Sir Godey Loumand, hear,
Arise and straight begone ;
Little Engel's coming with his troop
By four ways to the town.

“ Little Engel’s coming with his troop,
And he’ll be on us soon ;
And wroth is he, as wroth can be,
His war-lance scrapes the moon.”

“ At Stevn and Ting, my boy, I’ve been,
And wherever people mingle ;
But ne’er, I swear, have I been where
I’ve heard of little Engel.”

It was Godey Sir Loumand,
He stroked the page’s cheek ;
“ If thou canst give any good advice,
My pretty footboy, speak.”

“ If I can give any good advice
Most certainly I will ;
In your stone bower yourself immune
From the approaching ill.

“ The walls they are of marble stone,
The doors they are of lead ;
’Twill wondrous be, my lord, if we
Therein are prisoners made.”

It was the little Engel, he

Halted a while to gaze :

“ O there doth lie the Kirk, where died

My sire in smoke and blaze.

“ And there doth stand the castle, where

My uncle doth reside ;

The amends that he shall pay this day

The Lord in heaven decide.”

By four ways they the bower beset,

And for admission call :

The little Engel, sprightly elf,

Was foremost of them all.

It was Godey Sir Loumand, through

The casement out looked he :

“ Now hark, ye knaves, bid your captain tell

Why ye bawl so furiously ? ”

Then answered little Engel straight

Beneath his mantle ruddy :

“ Engel he’s stiled, your sister’s child,

And I am he, Sir Godey.”

Then answered Godey Sir Loumand, he
Was surely wroth thereat :
“ Ride hence, and boast not of thy birth,
Thou art a bastard brat.”

“ And though a bastard brat I be,
My fortune’s not the worse ;
Enough I hold of silver and gold,
And ride on a gallant horse.

“ And if a bastard brat I be,
Thou mad’st me that I trow ;
But still I’ve towers, and pleasant bowers,
And of green woods enow.

“ My sire thou slew’st, and no amends
To me didst ever make ;
Now scoff thou hast upon me cast,
For which thy life I’ll take.

“ Bring gold, my merry men, and that
Before the threshold lay ;
We’ll burn the bower this very hour,
We well for it can pay.”

'Twas hot within the forerom when
The fire began to roar ;
But hotter in the stone bower, when
The lead began to pour.

It was the little Engel, he
His courser never turned
To ride away from the castelaye
Before the bower was burned.

Away at last he rode, and waved
His hand in exultation,
Upon espying his uncle lying
Amidst the conflagration.

Said little Engel, when he saw
His uncle's body shrink :
"Now thou hast quaffed the self same draught
Thou mad'st my father drink."

It was the little Engel, rode
Home to his mother's hall ;
Before it stood his mother good,
So fair arrayed in pall.

“ Here dost thou stand, my mother dear,
 Arrayed in robes of pall ;
I’ve ridden up the land, and well
 Avenged my father’s fall.”

It was the fair Dame Malfred, wrung
 Her hands and wept amain :
“ I’d but one care before to bear,
 And now, alas, have twain ! ”

“ Dear mother, thou wouldst have it so,
 Now thee in tears I find,
When duteously thy will I’ve done :
 How strange is woman’s mind ! ”

He turned his steed and rode away,
 His face with anger red ;
With dishevelled hair, the Dame stood there,
 Such woeful tears she shed.

The little Engel hied him to
 The King his master’s court ;
Abroad the Dane King stood, and hailed
 The youth in kindest sort.

Into the hall Sir Engel then

With the good monarch went :

“ My choicest thanks, thou noble King,

For thy brave warriors lent.

“ Now I’ve avenged my father’s death,

Burnt is Sir Godey’s bower ;

And he therein has found a tomb,

Who slew my sire of yore.”

AN ELEGY.

Where shall I rest my hapless head,
Heavy with grief? how plenteously
Must I the briny torrents shed—

Alack and woe is me !

Our chief is gone, at last, at last,
The safeguard of our nation he ;
The glory of our age is past—

Alack and woe is me !

Unto the swords, O father dear,
Of foemen thirsting horribly
For blood, why leave thy children here ?

Alack and woe is me !

Of justice is the fountain dried,
And mute the law's high symphony ;
Fallen is Europa's brightest pride—
Alack and woe is me.

There is a change of times and things
That passeth on eternally,
Decreed by Him, the King of Kings—
'Tis right—but woe is me !

Now is the earth with violets gay,
And flowers manifold to see ;
Now frozen 'neath the winter's sway—
How brief the roses be !

Now shews the sun his head of gold
With a superior brilliancy ;
Now hides as were he dead and cold—
Alack and woe is me.

O father ! I will lave thy tomb
With tear-drops well becoming me ;
Thy tomb with flowery herbs perfume—
How brief the roses be !

EPIGRAMS.

From the Persian.

I.

Hear what once the pigmy clever
To the stupid giant said :
Things are not of highest value
Which do highest rear their head ;
The sluggish horse is nothing better
Than the donkey lowest bred.

2.

The man who of his words is sparing
His strength and weakness hidden keeps ;
Think not every thicket empty,
Perchance in one a tiger sleeps.

3.

If thou would'st ruin 'scape, and blackest woe,
Unto these words, these precious words
attend :

Never be heedless of a mortal foe,
Nor choose a proud and envious man for
friend.

4.

Sit down with your friends in delightful repose
When war and contention you see 'midst your
foes ;
But when to an end their contentions they bring,
Then, then seize the bow, and get ready the
sling.

5.

The hungry hound upon the bone will pounce
He prowling finds, and not mistrustful pass ;
He asks not whom it did belong to once,
The prophet's camel or the sinner's ass.

6.

Great Aaroun is dead, and is nothing, the man
Who left forty castles replete with gold store ;
But living though dead is the great Nourshwan,
In the good name he left he has death
triumphed o'er.

7.

Though God provides our daily bread,
Yet all must seek that bread I ween ;
Though all must die, there is no need
To rush the dragon's jaws between.

8.

THE KING AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

If in the boor's garden the King eats a pear,
His servants rapacious the tree will uptear ;
For every five eggs he gives bounteously, more
Than five hundred fowls will his armies devour.

9.

THE DEVOUT MAN AND THE
TYRANT.

If the half of a loaf the devout man receives,
The half of that half to the wretched he gives ;
But no sooner a tyrant one kingdom has ta'en,
Than the wish of his heart is another to gain.

10.

THE CAT AND THE BEGGAR.

If a cat could the power of flying enjoy,
She all the world's sparrows would quickly
destroy ;
If power in the hands of a beggar you place,
No mercy he'll show to the beggarly race.

11.

THE KING AND TAYLOR.

The taylor who travels in far foreign lands,
Can always get bread by the work of his hands ;
But the King who from throne and from country
has fled,
Must oft without supper go sighing to bed.

12.

GOLD COIN AND STAMPED LEATHER.

Of the children of wisdom how like is the face
To pure gold that's accepted in every place ;
But the ignorant great are much like leather cash,
At home which though current, abroad is but trash.

13.

So much like a friend with your foe ever deal,
That you never need dread the least scratch from
his steel ;
But ne'er with your friend deal so much like a foe,
That you ever must dread from his faulchion a
blow.


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